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High 60, low 41.
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The Houston Post
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SUNDAY, February 9, 1992

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EARLY EDITION

# A first look at Dallas' JFK files

## New evidence about picture of Oswald

## Identity of arrested 'bums' still in doubt

BY RAY LA FONTAINE AND MARY LA FONTAINE
SPECIAL TO THE HOUSTON POST

DALLAS — Recently released documents from Dallas Police Department files on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy will add fuel to one argument favored by conspiracy buffs and raise new questions on another.

Lodged within the 18 legal-size standing file folders in the city's archives are several photos of accused presidential killer Lee Harvey Oswald and police arrest forms for three men who until now were nameless and identified only as "bums" or "tramps" who were picked up following the shooting of Kennedy and then-Texas Gov. John Connally.

One photo of Oswald's back yard in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas shows clear evidence of darkroom manipulation of a type long associated by some photo analysts with attempts to frame Oswald by "inserting" him into the background.

Whether the manipulation was done by conspirators or by police personnel seeking to duplicate the process has not been determined. Copies of the print, which ostensibly dates to 1963 and is part of the collection administered by Dallas city archivist Cindy Smolovik, have not yet been made available for publication.

The purported arrest records housed in the files — recently ordered opened by the Dallas City Council — reveal for the first time the stated names of three enigmatic "tramps" arrested within minutes of the Nov. 22, 1963, shooting of Kennedy and Connally as they rode in a motorcade through Dealy Plaza shortly before noon.

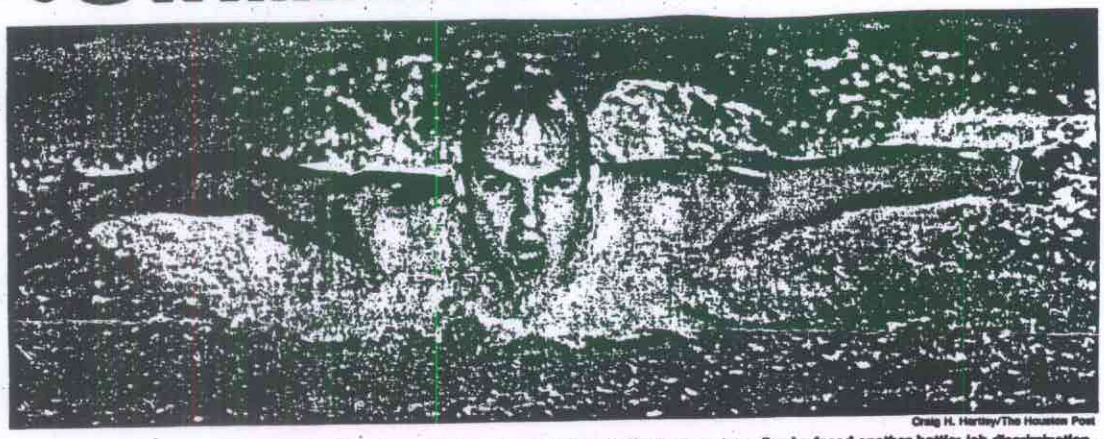
At the time of their arrests — because of their efforts to reach boxcars in the rail yard behind the plaza — the three were suspects in the assassination.

Until now, no arrest records were believed kept — a frequent criticism leveled at Dallas police by assassination conspiracy researchers and widely repeated in the media, including a recent cover story in Newsweek magazine.

The newly released photo print shows the familiar stairs, fence and shrubbery found in a set of three backyard photos in which Oswald is seen holding a rifle in his left hand and left-wing news-

Please see JFK, A-27

## ~SWIMMING UPSTREAM~



Craig H. Hartley/The Houston Post

After battling bone cancer, first diagnosed in 1988, former triathlon competitor Randy Mertes came to realize he faced another battle: job discrimination.

# Looking for a job? You'd better hope you're healthy

BY D.J. WILSON
POST MEDICAL REPORTER

Randy Mertes, diagnosed more than four years ago with bone cancer, underwent surgery to remove his left knee and thighbone in March 1988.

Doctors gave him a knee prosthesis and bone transplant and ever since he's been in remission. But following his recovery, the former triathlon athlete encountered yet another problem he thought at the time was incurable.

For months he looked for a job, but was faced with what he described as covert discrimination. He believed his bone cancer made employers perceive him as a potential problem with a big price tag.

"When it came up, it was almost like you poured a bucket of cold water down the interviewer's back," Mertes, 29, said.

He was never told he was passed over for jobs because of his medical record, but he was sure of it.

Mertes eventually landed a job with Continental Airlines and feels his job is secure. He was even recently promoted.

Others with so-called "pre-existing conditions" aren't so fortunate.

Exclusionary tactics by employers and insurers raising deductibles are becoming more commonplace, leaving thousands, perhaps millions, of people searching for jobs and unable to get or afford health coverage. The cold result is jobless, uninsured people hoping they don't get sick again and others afraid to change jobs because they might lose their insurance.

The reason for the trend is simple.

"The insurance industry, for purely rational, economic reasons, is making it harder for these people to attain and keep coverage at a reasonable price," said Charles Begley, associate professor of health policy at the University of Texas School of Public Health. The development is yet another aspect of the much-discussed and widely felt health care crisis. As costs rise, there is a scramble to spread the expense and to limit liability.

Social workers, counselors and advocates for those with various diseases have seen evidence of this in a growing trend by companies to deny employment and by insurers to refuse coverage based on a pre-existing condition in an applicant's medical history.

Some of the diseases and conditions: diabetes, colitis, lupus, cancer, heart disease and AIDS.

Employers and insurers aren't the only ones making decisions based on health care costs.

Often employees with chronic health problems keep their jobs solely because they are afraid if they switch jobs their new company won't cover their condition.

Cathy Thomas of the Lupus Founda-

Please see HEALTH, A-26

# Democrats on 'vulture watch' as Clinton's problems mount

BY JOHN GRAVOIS
POST WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — Concern that Bill Clinton's victory waltz is becoming a death march has Democrats privately and not so privately scrambling to position other candidates for possible last-minute presidential campaigns.

Dubbed the "vulture watch" by the American Political Network, which compiles a daily campaign hot line, the long and ever-evolving list of potential late entrants includes New York Gov. Mario Cuomo, Texas Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, Tennessee Sen. Al Gore, Missouri Rep. Richard Gephardt and practically every Democratic member of Congress who ever considered running.

There's even been speculation about Texas Gov. Ann Richards joining the race. But, like almost everyone else being mentioned, she claims not to be interested.

The exception is Cuomo, who maintains he's neither encouraging nor discouraging efforts by supporters to wage a write-in campaign on his behalf in the primary kickoff state of New Hampshire and to line up delegates for him in Illinois and other states. "You try not to be ungracious," he says.

No other candidate-in-waiting has organizations openly campaigning for them, but their supporters are poised to put together operations almost immediately after the Feb. 18 New Hampshire vote if Clinton crashes there.

Just a few weeks ago, polls suggested Clinton

Please see DEMOCRATS, A-19

CUOMO: Write-in

# Racial turmoil could mar New Orleans' Mardi Gras

BY STEVE OLAFSON
OF THE HOUSTON POST STAFF

NEW ORLEANS — They call Mardi Gras the world's greatest party, but in 1992 the party will be held in a city that finds itself divided over the breaking of tradition and the ongoing battle over race and power.

To the thousands of tourists who come to New Orleans for the 12-day celebration that precedes Lent, Mardi Gras will look much the same as in years past.

Parades will roll through the historic streets, masked figures on floats will toss beads to drunken revelers and formal balls will be held to present the latest crop of debutantes to New Orleans society.

The natives, though, will notice a few changes. The Mistick Krewe of Comus, the secret Carnival society that is the city's oldest, will not parade on Mardi Gras night as in years past.

Neither will the Knights of Momus parade.

Both carnival clubs, composed of the city's most elite, white males, are sitting out this year to protest a new city ordinance that

Please see MARDI GRAS, A-27

# JFK: A look into long-sealed Dallas police files

From A-1

papers in his right.

Those pictures were taken by Oswald's wife, Marina, at their Oak Cliff residence, according to testimony collected by the Warren Commission, which investigated the assassination. The commission concluded Oswald was acting alone when he murdered Kennedy and wounded Connally, firing at them from behind and from a sixth-floor window in the Dallas School Book Depository.

Numerous photo analysts have since contended, as did Oswald himself the day following the assassination, that the backyard photos were artificially created to produce an incriminating image.

Two of the photos were discovered by Dallas police immediately after the assassination. The third came to light in 1975. One of the photos appeared on the cover of Life magazine in 1964.

In the manipulated print in police files Oswald does not appear. Instead, there is a white silhouette of a human figure holding an apparent rifle and newspapers. The silhouette appears to be an example of matting, a darkroom technique that can serve as an intermediate step in the combining of photographic images.

The silhouette print was not seen by the Warren Commission.

Photographic experts Hershal Womack of Texas Tech University in Lubbock and Jack White of Fort Worth have noted a variety of alleged technical inconsistencies with the backyard pictures. They have theorized the artificial addition of Oswald's image to the background by means of matting as the most likely explanation.

Until now, no evidence of such an attempted matting has surfaced.

Among the newly opened files are more photos of the Oswald home back yard, but without Oswald in them.

Conspiracy advocates such as Anthony Summers and Jim Marrs (author of *Crossfire*, an important source in Oliver Stone's controversial movie *JFK*) have claimed that certain Dallas film lab employees were summoned on the night of the assassination to process photographs for the FBI and Dallas police.

Among the photos processed that night, Marrs claims, was one of the back yard without Oswald in the picture. Until now there has been no direct evidence to support that claim.

The matted print and other photos without human figures in them appear similar in background to the long-available backyard photos showing Oswald, with rifle and newspapers, but could vary slightly from the known prints. That cannot be determined until they are released for full examination.

The significance of the photographic finds in the police files, Womack suggests, is that "they may represent part of the necessary steps — an empty background, for example — for faking backyard photos of Oswald."

"The real question is, what was the purpose of this exercise? To fake the photos or to demonstrate that the faking could be done?" Womack said. "I'd have to ask why anyone — in or out of police uniform — would be trying to demonstrate this back in 1963 or 1964. No one but Mark Lane was talking conspiracy then, and his complaints were about the retouching done by major news organizations, not anything as sophisticated as matting."

The authenticity of the backyard photos was also addressed in the final report of the House Select Committee on Assassinations issued in 1979.

"Fake backyard photographs," the congressional document noted, "would indicate a degree of conspiratorial sophistication that would almost necessarily raise the possibility that a highly organized group had conspired to kill the president and make Oswald a 'patsy.'"

The photos lodged in the police department files are certain to increase the conspiracy firestorm swirling within and around Stone's movie. The police department information on the three "tramps" or "bums" will only add more fuel to it.

There have been many unanswered questions concerning the three men — one appearing in his 50s, the others in their early 30s — arrested within minutes of the shooting in Dealy Plaza.

Though allegedly vagrants pulled from boxcars, the men were noted in photographs to sport fresh haircuts and suspiciously good shoes. The supposed lack of official arrest documentation — including the failure to even retain their names and their immediate release and disappearance — has raised the greatest consternation among conspiracy researchers.

The archival files show records were indeed apparently kept on the three. They list their names as Gus W. Abrams, 53, Harold Doyle, 32, and John Forrester Gedney, 38. Left empty on arrest forms, however, are spaces for an arrest number, ID number and right thumbprint.

The reports, filed by officer W.E. Chambers, are dated Nov. 22, 1963, at 4 p.m. They list charges against the three as vagrancy and robbery.

"These men were taken off a train boxcar in the rail yards right after President Kennedy was shot," Chambers writes on Abrams' arrest description. Descriptions on the two other reports are similar.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DALLAS — Renewed interest in President John F. Kennedy's assassination has forced Special Olympics International, a chief charitable project of the Kennedy family, to drop Dallas from consideration as the site of its 1995 games.

The city was a finalist for the games, in which thousands of disabled athletes from nearly 100

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